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## OUR ANSWER TO THE CENTRAL POWERS

Addressed to the Swedish Minister at Washington, in Charge of Austro-Hungarian Affairs, September 17, 1918

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your note dated September 16, communicating to me a note from the Imperial Government of Austria-Hungary, containing a proposal to the governments of all belligerent States to send delegates to a confidential and unbinding discussion on the basic principles for the conclusion of peace. Furthermore, it is proposed that the delegates would be charged to make known to one another the conception of their governments regarding these principles, and to receive analogous communications, as well as to request and give frank and candid explanations on all these points which need to be precisely defined.

In reply, I beg to say that the substance of your communication has been submitted to the President, who now directs me to inform you that the Government of the United States feels that there is only one reply which it can make to the suggestion of the Imperial Austro-Hungarian Government. It has repeatedly, and with entire candor, stated the terms upon which the United States would consider peace, and can and will entertain no proposal for a conference upon a matter concerning which it has made its position and purpose so plain.

Accept, Sir, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

ROBERT LANSING,  
*Secretary of State.*

## THE BALKAN TANGLE

By DAVID STARR JORDAN

FOR the purpose of this discussion we must take for granted that the reader knows something of the geography of the Balkan region, as also of the "grim, raw races" which inhabit it. These were conquered by the Turks in the fifteenth century, to be subjected through four hundred years to the vicissitudes of Turkish rule, whereby periods of utter neglect alternated with episodes of religious zeal interpreted in terms of massacre.

The catastrophic confusions which have intermittently followed escape from Turkish rule in the last century are in no sense consequences of freedom; neither are they the result of special racial defects or tendencies. As a whole, the Balkan races are on a fair level in intelligence and capacity with other European folk. Thus far, they have not had a fair chance, politically.

The history of the Balkans has been conditioned on five main elements: (1) emancipation long drawn out, the various districts which gained their freedom from time to time forming separate centers of population and rapidly developing national rivalries; (2) the placing over most of these new States of German or Germanized princes, trained in the poisonous atmosphere of petty courts; (3) the infesting of the courts at all times by the secret agents of three unscrupulous dynasties, each

having something to offer and that offensive or injurious to the other States; (4) the weakening of respect for human life by servitude through long generations; and finally (5) a confusion of tongues. As to this last, the Balkan peoples speak at least seven distinct languages, five of them (Slavic, Roumanian, Greek, Hebrew, and Turkish) using different alphabets and with scarcely a linguistic root in common, while along the borders and in the courts six world-tongues (French, German, English, Russian, Italian, and Spanish) further crowd for recognition. Under such conditions, racial identity is confused; a man is known by the language he speaks.

Adding to the general complication, two further elements have had their part in creating dissension. In the first place, there are four State hierarchies, or churches, each a political organization, and at least three of them, according to a Bulgarian leader, "unconcerned with either religion or morals." Secondly, under Turkish control all ancient boundaries were obliterated and promiscuous migrations resulted in inextricable racial entanglement, especially in Macedonia. Moreover, the absence of coherent law, with universal social subservience, reduced all races and all social ranks to a common level—at the bottom.\*

Southward, members of each nationality strayed over the borders, and in Macedonia Bulgarians, Serbs, Turks, Greeks, Vlachs (Roumanians), and Jews were found everywhere. Of these, the Bulgarians and Serbs occupied mostly the uplands and farming districts, the Greeks crowded the seashore, while the Jews were mainly centered in Salonica, where they still speak the Spanish dialect of Barcelona, whence their ancestors had been driven.

Let us imagine, if we can, that similar conditions had beset our American colonies. Let us suppose, for instance, that instead of the mild Prussianism of George III our ancestors had been subjected for four hundred years to a tyranny twenty times as great and wholly alien at that. Suppose further that nine colonies had been more or less racially distinct, the races being pure in certain centers, hopelessly confused in others, all utterly diverse in language and more or less so in origin. Suppose also that half a century had intervened between the independence of Massachusetts and that of Carolina and, moreover, that most of the former colonies had in turn been forced to accept a narrow-minded alien as king, with a court infested by secret agents of envying great powers. Let us again suppose that each State and its big neighbors had adopted a system of cut-throat tariffs for one another's injury. Under such circumstances, one may easily see that the United States of America would not soon have risen as a unified republic, whatever its array of Washingtons, Franklins, Hamiltons, and Jeffersons. Union might have come around at last, of course; even the United States of the Balkans is still in the lap of the gods. But the road to it is a very rocky one, with much distress and calamity ahead.

\*This condition has made for ultimate democracy, as in Bulgaria and Serbia, where hereditary orders of nobility were never revived.